District 9 Area Plan

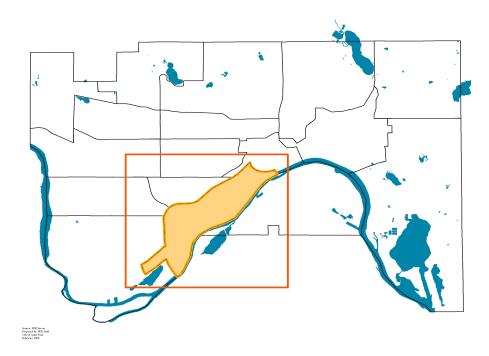
Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul Recommended by the Planning Commission – 7/10/2009 Adopted by the City Council – 7/7/2010

This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the West 7th Street/Fort Road District 9 Area Plan and replaces the District 9 Plan adopted in 1980. The plan addresses the area centered on West 7th from downtown to Homer Street. It contains an overview of the current conditions of the area, visions and goals, strategies, and implementation steps. The plan addresses several key areas of focus: 1) housing; 2) jobs and economic development; 3) community development; 4) mix of land uses; 5) historic preservation and aesthetics; 6) environmental quality; and 7) transportation and circulation. Strategies are presented for each of these key areas. This summary highlights those strategies for which the City has primary implementation responsibilities.

Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the office of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation.

Location

The study area is generally bounded by Downtown to the east, the Mississippi River to the south, and Interstate 35E to the north and west.



District 9 Area Plan Summary

Vision

Over the next 10 years, more than 4,000 new housing units will be built in District 9. The challenge in the community is to planfully integrate these new units into the existing density of the community, maintain the existing housing stock, and retain the character of District 9. New housing units and households will impact adjacent land uses, social concerns and support, traffic and transit demand, retail demand, pedestrian and bicycle safety, design standards and the market for diverse and affordable housing options. Each section includes trends, key issues, and actions to realize the community envisioned for the next 20 years.

Through the realization of a new District plan for District 9, the District hopes to:

- Maintain a diversity of households in regard to income, age, and race/ethnicity.
- Maintain existing housing stock while developing new housing to meet the diversity of households' needs.
- Link the neighborhoods within West 7th more strongly to one another.
- Link the community of West 7th to the amenities and opportunities within and outside of the community.
- Develop job opportunities through retail, services, entertainment, and clean industrial development.
- Wisely reuse industrial sites consistent with the plan.
- Respect the Mississippi River as a community asset, limit new building on the river and seek opportunities to connect the neighborhoods to the riverfront.
- Improve environmental quality for a sustainable future.
- Promote aesthetic values in rehabilitation and development efforts.

Specific Action Strategies and Implementation Steps

Housing

The plan emphasizes the need to preserve and improve existing housing stock while allowing new, large housing developments in specific geographic areas. The neighborhood's housing stock spans 150 years, and new construction should respect and complement the character of existing housing in the community. Housing stock, both new and refurbished, should continue to provide a mix of incomes with affordable places to live. Additions to the housing stock should take place near transit. In addition:

- Neighborhood sub-areas such as the Jefferson School area, Uppertown and Butternut neighborhoods, the area north of West 7th bordered by I-35E and St. Clair, Nugent Street and the Kipps Glen neighborhood need to be preserved.
- Key sites identified for major housing developments are: 1) the Gateway Area; 2) Schmidt Brewery site; 3) Randolph/Shepard/West 7th; 4) Victoria Park.
- Key sites identified for redevelopment include: 1) Jefferson School area; 2) Uppertown and Butternut neighborhoods; 3) area north of West 7th bordered by I-35E and St. Clair;

4) Nugent Street; 5) Kipps Glen neighborhood.

Key strategies for Housing are:

Preservation and improvement of existing housing:

- 1. Maintain the character of existing residential areas by keeping zoning appropriate to residential neighborhoods.
- 2. Encourage retention of ownership of properties through owner-occupant home loan programs, and enforce residency of owners who claim homestead property designation.
- 3. Study rezoning the area of District 9 bounded by Grand Avenue to the North, Interstate 35E to the Northwest, Smith Avenue to the East, Shepard Road to the Southeast and Grace Street to the South to assess the impact of the conversion of single family homes to multi-family residences and consider downzoning with the intent to prevent future conversions of single-family homes and require deconversion of homes designed as single-family when the property has been vacant for 365 days.
- 4. Study rezoning the area of District 9 bounded by Randolph Avenue to the North, Shepard Road to the Southeast, Otto Avenue to the South and West 7th Street to the Northeast to address changing land use patterns.
- 5. Enforce current ordinances regarding accessory housing units.
- 6. Enforce current ordinances or develop new housing policies to ensure the fair dispersal of residential facilities and transitional housing, and enforce ordinances regarding sober houses in St. Paul.
- 7. Enforce the Property Maintenance Code equitably and reasonably throughout the community to stave off deterioration of the housing stock.
- 8. Reinstate low interest loans and/or grants for rehabilitation (like the Houses to Homes program) and other finance programs designed to rehabilitate older homes.
- 9. Market existing housing through the City of Saint Paul sponsorship of the Home Tour.

Additions to the housing supply, especially near transit:

- 10. Study rezoning the Chestnut/Exchange area to develop medium-density housing adjacent to Irvine Park. Innovative plans to screen the Xcel Energy Center parking ramp (along Eagle) should be part of the development.
- 11. Ensure that the new Victoria Park development is integrated and connected with the existing Randolph and View neighborhoods.
- 12. Promote those stretches of West 7th between key nodes as the appropriate location for higher-density residential use, in order to add diversity to the housing stock while preserving the traditional neighborhood fabric and supporting existing and future transit investment.

Housing additions and improvements to complement existing housing:

13. Investigate ways to require site plan review of all housing by the City to ensure that new construction is sensitive to the context of the neighborhood in which it is developed.

14. Enforce building codes to ensure that infill housing maintains integrity of the foundation and structure of the building, due to the geology of the area.

Housing additions and improvements at a cost/income mix to meet market demand and the City's housing policy:

15. Identify strategic areas to incorporate mixed-use and higher-density development in context with existing structures.

Jobs and Economic Development

The District is in favor of bringing in new "clean" industries, with the caveat that they operate to improve the environment and meet the employment needs of the community. The main artery, West 7th, needs to thrive as the major commercial corridor. While there may be satellite commercial areas, e.g., the Randolph, Shepard and Chestnut intersection, they should not compete with businesses on West 7th. The plan endorses effective reuse of industrial, polluted and under-used sites, and identifies priority redevelopment sites.

Key strategies for Jobs and Economic Development are:

Preservation of business and jobs in the area while complementing housing objectives:

- 16. Support "nodes" of retail businesses at the intersections of West 7th and Kellogg, Smith, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, and Montreal/Lexington, rather than a continuous strip of retail throughout the length of West 7th.
- 17. Require site plan review by the City to ensure that new construction is sensitive to the context of the neighborhood in which it is developed.
- 18. Investigate ways to incorporate the Fort Road Design Guidelines for commercial areas into city code, including as a city-wide requirement or as an overlay district.
- 19. Study the potential to widen sidewalks when new structures are built on West 7th, while maintaining street width.
- 20. Determine appropriate locations for permit parking expansion in those areas impacted by Xcel Energy Center and RiverCentre event attendees and hospital complex employees.
- 21. Encourage flexible parking strategies such as shared parking for commercial and institutional users, and parking behind structures.
- 22. Develop a parking management plan as recommended in the *Seven Corners Gateway Plan*.

Effective reuse of industrial, polluted and under-used sites:

- 23. After demolition of the Xcel High Bridge coal power plant, maintain the site as open space, such as a soccer field.
- 24. Complete the full build-out of the community's plan for Victoria Park.

Priority redevelopment sites:

25. Support the adaptive reuse for limited retail/commercial of the Head House at Chestnut and Shepard, creatively planning for adequate parking.

Community Development

Community gathering places and access to community initiatives are important to the District 9 Council and highlighted in the plan. Opportunities for community gathering places must be realized in redevelopment plans of former industrial properties. Continuing to improve institutions serving families and children, particularly local schools and libraries, is important. District 9 has two community centers, St. Clair and the Salvation Army, and one small recreation center, Palace. The two public gathering places are inadequate for the needs of the community. Over the last 35 years, District 9 has fought for preservation of school options in the community. Redevelopment sites need to allow for public access to amenities in the community. District 9 has always been endowed with facilities of various faith traditions which contribute to the quality of life in the neighborhood through worship and outreach programs. District 9 is perceived as safer now than it was several years ago; however, community policing activities should be strengthened. Quality of life in District 9 is compromised because of a lack of park space in the neighborhood. The plan endorses the National Great River Park planning effort, as well as a coordinated, integrated plan of parks development throughout the neighborhood.

Key strategies for community development include:

Recreation and community centers:

- 26. Incorporate programming for community youth that is more diverse than only sports activities.
- 27. Replace the Palace playground building, and upgrade the grounds and recreation center; work with the community to identify needed improvements.

Libraries:

- 28. Maintain a library facility in the community to meet the expanding and evolving community needs.
- 29. Continue to work with the libraries to ensure that facilities meet evolving community needs.

Community gathering places and public access:

- 30. Incorporate green space and other public spaces in major redevelopments such as the Brewery, Randolph/Shepard/West 7th, and Victoria Park developments.
- 31. Maintain and improve public access to streets, parks, green areas and the river.

Public safety:

- 32. Provide appropriate lighting and visibility for the recreational bike trail along I-35E.
- 33. Develop new West 7th lighting, utilizing the historic lantern style in all of Area 1, the area of West 7th from Kellogg to Grace Street.
- 34. Add signage throughout the neighborhood to provide information for connecting trails. Maintain consistency with Parks signage.
- 35. Develop traffic calming strategies along the major arteries in the neighborhood, such as

- West 7th, Montreal, Victoria, Otto, Randolph, Lexington, St. Clair, and Smith.
- 36. Increase the enforcement of traffic laws, especially regarding speeding and pedestrian rights.

Parks:

- 37. Improve connections between parks to create a system of greenways.
- 38. Identify areas for off-leash dog parks, particularly because of the expansion of housing in the community.
- 39. Assess the Uppertown neighborhood's needs to be sure that Dousman Park serves the children in the area.
- 40. Prioritize areas of higher-density housing and apartment units for new play parks.
- 41. Identify areas for park/green space in the large residential areas on both sides of West 7th between Shepard and I-35E and Randolph.
- 42. Study the need for additional parking at the East entrance of Crosby Farm Park.
- 43. Improve access to the river by better and more vertical connections from the bluff (especially at the end of Walnut and at the High Bridge) and a pedestrian tunnel under Shepard Road.
- 44. If Island Station is not redeveloped preserving the original building as housing, consider reuse of the site as a public park property and the building as a park facility.
- 45. After demolition of the Xcel High Bridge coal power plant, maintain the site as open space, such as a soccer field.
- 46. Pursue acquisition of riverfront property for public domain easements for access.
- 47. Monitor and, where necessary, remove and replace dead, dying, or diseased boulevard trees.

Land Use Mix

District 9 has a broad variety of land uses. It is desirable to encourage compatible residential and business uses in new development. The commercial land use along West 7th should be confined to the block "face" and not extend into residential neighborhoods. A mix of land uses should be integrated within the community while stressing the fact that compatibility is the keystone in maintaining this land use diversity in a dense neighborhood.

Key strategies include:

- 48. Inventory residential character on West 7th and evaluate where it might be appropriate for higher-density residential infill.
- 49. Concentrate commercial activity at key nodes along West 7th to improve viability of businesses. These include the intersections of West 7th with Kellogg, Grand, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, Otto, and Montreal.

Historic Preservation and Aesthetics

New development should complement the existing community. Specific areas that have sustained their character for more than 100 years need special attention to ensure that they are

not lost to development and gentrification during the to be enforced.	next decades. Urban design guidelines need
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Strategies highlighted under historic preservation and aesthetics include:

Historic character of the community:

- 50. Pursue local and National Register designation for the Schmidt Brewery historic buildings.
- 51. Pursue local designation of the Leech/McBoal and Butternut neighborhoods, either as individual buildings or as districts.
- 52. Pursue local and National Register designation of the original limestone residential and commercial buildings in West 7th.

<u>Urban design:</u>

- 53. Utilize Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines to guide improvements to the physical environment to reduce crime (i.e., develop defensible spaces) and improve the aesthetic environment.
- 54. Enforce the Victoria Park Master Plan guidelines.

Environmental Quality

District 9 has a strong connection to the Mississippi River, a connection that must be preserved both physically and psychologically. In addition, the community has been affected by air, water, ground and noise pollution. The plan recommends that development and related activities minimize the environmental effect on residents today and in the future. In conducting new development and redevelopment activities, following the guidelines of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is important in maintaining a healthy environment.

Key strategies for preserving environmental quality include:

- 55. Identify formerly-polluted sites for clean-up, e.g., at Randolph and Milton, James and Randolph, and at the end of Drake at Shepard, and determine appropriate mitigation.
- 56. Encourage the use of rain gardens and green roofs in new development.
- 57. Integrate transit planning into new developments.

Transportation and Circulation

The community is bounded by major thoroughfares providing ample vehicle access throughout the community. However, the number of trips made on these roadways increases each year. The plan includes provisions for pedestrian and child safety, balancing the needs of transit users with those of drivers, and maintaining provisions for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Key strategies for transportation and circulation include:

Vehicular circulation:

58. Investigate a redesign of the intersection of West 7th and Smith Avenue (including McBoal between Smith and West 7th and the alley between McBoal and Goodrich behind the tire company) to ensure enough room to make a safe turn onto Smith by large semitrailer trucks.

- 59. Investigate an interchange at Shepard and 35E to remove through-traffic from neighborhood streets.
- 60. Investigate redesign of the intersection of West 7th Street, Montreal Avenue and Lexington Parkway.
- 61. Explore the redesign of Shepard Road from Homer Street to Davern Street with a planted median and ornamental lighting.
- 62. Construct new street segments within the Brewery site to connect to neighboring streets and break up the site into urban block increments.

Pedestrian and child safety:

- 63. Improve bridges to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use, e.g., West 7th overpass between St. Clair and Jefferson.
- 64. Improve timing of lights for trains to improve safety and access for pedestrians.
- 65. Promote traffic-calming features to slow down traffic, e.g., bump outs, marked crosswalks, street trees, and pedestrian lighting along the following: West 7th at key nodes; Smith Avenue between the High Bridge and West 7th; Osceola between West 7th and Jefferson; Otto from Shepard to West 7th; Jefferson, Canton and Victoria for access to West 7th.

Public transit:

66. Promote new development that will fully utilize existing transit services, and encourage continued and improved transit facilities.

Bicycle and pedestrian options:

- 67. Provide access between West 7th and the Mississippi River, e.g., at the street level from Chestnut and Shepard and vertically, Irvine Park at Walnut, Uppertown at the High Bridge.
- 68. Connect the bike path between West 7th and Crosby Farm Park.
- 69. Encourage the City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works and Division of Parks and Recreation to provide consistent and regular maintenance of the bike path along I-35E.
- 70. Improve the condition and, where possible, widen sidewalks throughout the community.
- 71. Improve pedestrian access and safety at the intersection of West 7th with Lexington.
- 72. Develop a bike trail on Jefferson to Schmidt Brewery and Shepard Road along Duke.
- 73. Establish a bike lane on Otto between West 7th and Shepard.

Priority Actions for City Participation

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or signification participation by City government. Community groups and city departments should implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for City resources in competitive processes such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working though the regular operating programs of relevant City departments.

- 1. Maintain the character of existing residential areas by keeping zoning appropriate to residential neighborhoods.
- 9. Study rezoning the Chestnut/Exchange area to TN2 to develop medium-density housing adjacent to Irvine Park. Innovative plans to screen the Xcel Energy Center parking ramp (along Eagle) should be part of the development.
- 15. Support "nodes" of retail businesses at the intersections of West 7th and Kellogg, Smith, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, and Montreal/Lexington, rather than a continuous strip of retail throughout the length of West 7th.
- 23. Complete the full build-out of the community's plan for Victoria Park.
- 24. Support the adaptive reuse for limited retail/commercial of the Head House at Chestnut and Shepard, creatively planning for adequate parking.
- 26. Replace the Palace playground building and upgrade the grounds and recreation center; work with the community to identify needed improvements.
- 32. Develop new West 7th lighting, utilizing the historic lantern style in all of Area 1, the area along West 7th between Kellogg and Grace Street.
- 33. Provide appropriate lighting and visibility for the recreational bike trail along I-35E.
- 48. Pursue acquisition of riverfront property for public domain easements for access.
- 60. Investigate an interchange at Shepard and I-35E to remove through traffic from neighborhood streets.
- 61. Investigate redesigning the intersection of West 7th Street, Montreal Avenue and Lexington Parkway
- 73. Improve pedestrian access and safety at the intersection of West 7th with Lexington Parkway.
- 74. Develop a bike trail on Jefferson to Schmidt Brewery and Shepard Road along Duke.
- 75. Establish a bike lane on Otto between West 7th and Shepard Road.

Planning Commission Findings

The Saint Paul Planning Commission recommended the District 9 Area Plan to the City Council on July 10, 2009. The Planning Commission made no changes to the document approved by the Neighborhood Planning Committee.

Planning Process

The District 9 Area Plan updates the 1983 District 9 Area Plan previously adopted by the City Council. This plan was developed by the West 7th/Fort Road Federation through a planning

committee. The committee began meeting in July 2004 and continued through the summer of 2005. The draft of the plan was presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation. The plan was adopted by the West 7th/Fort Road Federation in summer 2006.